The Cheerful Letter

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Every place a church; every day the Lord's day; all events blessings; all joy thanksgiving; and all nature and life full of Good.—James Freeman Clarke.

Vol. XLV DECEMBER, 1936 No. 6

CHRISTMAS EVE

M. L. C. Hastings

Candles in the windows,
Shining on the snow;
Stockings by the fireplace;
Faces all aglow;
Carols sung by children
At the open door—
These are joys of Christmas Eve
We'll keep forevermore!

—*Selected.*

THE CHRISTMAS STORY

In those days the Emperor Augustus decreed that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration made while Cyrenius was governor of Syria.

So all went to be registered, each to his own town. Joseph, because he was a descendant of David, went up with Mary his wife from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem in Judea, the birthplace of David, to be registered. Now Mary was about to become a mother, and while they were there the time came for her to be delivered. So she gave birth to his first son, and wrapped him in swaddling-clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

In that country there were Shepherds living in the fields and keeping watch over their flocks by night. And an angel from God stood by them and a divine radiance shone around them, and they were frightened. But the angel said to them:

Fear not, for behold I bring you good news
Of great joy which shall be for all the people.
For to you is born this day in the town of David
A Savior who is God's Annointed.
This will be a sign to guide you:
You will find a babe in swaddling-clothes lying in a manger.

Then suddenly there appeared with the angel a great number of the heavenly host singing praise to God and saying:

Glory to God on high,
And on earth peace, good-will among men.

When the angels had gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem to see this which God has made known to us." So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby was lying in a manger.

When they had seen him, they announced what had been told them about this child. All who heard the words of the shepherds wondered, but Mary treasured up these things and pondered them. And the shepherds returned, thanking and praising God because of what they had heard and seen as it had been foretold.

Also wise men from the East came to Jerusalem and asked, "Where is the newly born King of the Jews? For we saw his star in the east and have come to pay him homage." When Herod heard these things, he and everyone else in Jerusalem were greatly perturbed. So when he had gathered all the high priests and scribes together, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea," for so it is written by the prophet:

And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
Are not least among Judah's princes,
For out of you will come a leader,
Who will be the shepherd of my people Israel.

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Then Herod privately called the wise men and inquired of them exactly how long the star had been visible since its appearance in the east. Also he sent them to Bethlehem with the command, "Go and search carefully for the young child, and when you have found him, come and let me know, that I also may go and pay him homage." After their audience with the king they departed, and the star which they had seen in the east went before them until it stood over the place where the young child was. They were overjoyed at the sight; and when they came into the house and saw the child with Mary his mother, they knelt down and paid him homage. Opening their treasures they presented to him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

From "The Shorter Bible"

SECRETS

Katharine Harrington

I have so many secrets
To keep at Christmastide,
I have so many bundles
To tuck away and hide,
I almost go on tiptoe;
Because some little elf
Is sure to tell my secrets—
It couldn't be *myself!*

—*Clipped.*

We are not sent into this world to do anything into which we can not put our hearts. We have certain work to do for our bread and that is to be done strenuously; other work to do for our delight and that is to be done heartily; neither is to be done by halves or shifts, but with a will; and what is not worth this effort is not to be done at all. —*John Ruskin*

THE CHRISTMAS ROSE

(An Old Legend)

By Lizzie Deas

When the Magi laid their rich offerings of myrrh, frankincense, and gold by the bed of the sleeping Christ Child, legend says that a shepherd maiden stood outside the door quietly weeping.

She, too, had sought the Christ Child. She, too, desired to bring Him gifts, but she had nothing to offer, for she was very poor indeed. In vain, had she searched the countryside over for one little flower to bring Him, but she could find neither bloom nor leaf, for the winter had been cold.

And as she stood there weeping an angel passing saw her sorrow and stooping he brushed aside the snow at her feet. And there sprung up on the spot a cluster of beautiful winter roses,—waxen white with pink tipped petals.

"Nor myrrh, nor frankincense, nor gold," said the angel, "is offering more meet for the Christ Child than these pure Christmas roses."

Joyfully the shepherd maiden gathered the flowers and made her offering to the Holy Child.

—*The Blue Flower.*

CHRIST CALLS US TO SHARE

"Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these, my brethren, even the least, ye did it unto me." The words of our Christ come to us clearly today. In these days of need, Christ calls us to share with our fellow creatures. There are those of our community, yes, in our own midst, who are casting their all into His keeping, having faith that somehow He will sustain them. God, through Christ, gave His all for us. He today, has no other plan for His people, than that of His followers helping each other. If we fail Him, many will suffer. Let us heed His words, and give to those who are in need.

"There is a destiny that makes us
brothers;
None goes his way alone:
All that we send into the lives of others
Comes back into our own."

—*Edward Markham.*

THE MAN WHO NEVER SAW A CHRISTMAS

George Lawrence Parker

I met him one day, whether in vision or in the flesh, I know not, in the Christmas season.

His dress was in no way remarkable, but plain, and after the type of his fellow men.

Nor were his features to be noted, except for his clear, wistful, and puzzled eyes. There I could not avoid, as he stopped me in the city street, where the Christmas windows were kissed by snow and shoppers went about on gay errands.

"Friend," he said, "I am a stranger in your land. I wish you would tell me what this festivity, touched with special laughter, means."

"Why, this is Christmas," I said, in surprise, "and we celebrate the birth of Christ by wishing peace and justice and love to all men, and by the giving of gifts."

"Ah, yes, I see." But his face grew perplexed. "And so by a yearly reminder you cleanse the land of all hate and oppression. How wonderful! And how blessed everywhere the land must be!"

"Yes, that is what we hope for," I said.

"Hope for!" he exclaimed. "Must it be a hope after two thousand years? Can hope alone save the world? Has hope made justice the habit of your law courts? Has hope held back the hand of greed in your mills and factories? Have you, through hope, built better men and fewer prisons? Has hope led you to brotherhood? Through hope have you banished bloodshed and murder? And has hope filled your souls with abiding gladness?"

"Ah, dear sir," I replied, "these are the large social questions of our day! And 'twill take a long time to work them out. After the Christmas interruption, we shall busily apply ourselves to these matters again."

Then his eyes looked into mine, more wistful and sad than any eyes I had ever seen.

"After the Christmas interruption! A hope! A hope!" he murmured. "Yes, it will take a long time. Yet why so long? I have read your Christ's words, and they seem simple and not so hard. I notice, too, that he said little about manger, and cradle, and star, and gold, or frankincense, or myrrh. Your beautiful story of Christmas — yes, 'twill do you no harm! And yet—oh, not an interruption! Anything but that! Anything but that! Pardon me! I am puzzled! It will take so long, so long!"

His head sunk lower.

"But," I said, "you need not think this all so strange. Have you never seen a Christmas before?"

"No," came his brief muffled reply. "This is my first Christmas."

"Strange," I said. "Where were you born? What is your native land, your name?"

"The records of my birth were lost," he said. "I am seeking my native land in the hearts of men; but it will take so long! I never meant to interrupt peace, and justice, and love. A long time! An interruption!"

He disappeared. And the snow fell.

—*Christian Register.*

GOOD WILL

A beautiful sea surrounds my isle,
Its bounds they are wide and far;
It laps the beach at my feet—and goes
Where large horizons are.
Its tides flow north—its tides flow south:
Its waves are east, and west;
Which way is seen their silver sheen
Their crests break happiest.
If we take ship on this beautiful sea,
Not long shall our sails expand
Ere we make essay by this beautiful way
To the shores of a beautiful land—
Where beautiful hills, and beautiful streets,
And beautiful homes—we view;
With beautiful parents (and other folk),
And beautiful children—too.
We may visit this land—so far, so near—
May voyage, and yet again
By the sea of Love—in the ship Good Will
To the Homes—to the Hearts—of Men.

—*Edward F. Dickinson.*

CORRESPONDENTS AND APPEALS

Letters should be addressed to Mrs. Laura M. Hurst, 78 Penfield Street, Roslindale, Mass.

Persons writing to the Department for the first time should ask for an enrollment blank and give as reference the name and address of their minister.

When a correspondent moves to a new address, notice should be sent to Headquarters, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass., and to those persons who have been sending letters and reading matter.

It is necessary to state positively that the Cheerful Letter Exchange is not a "clothing bureau" and not a "charitable" society in the usual sense of the word.

It is contrary to the rules of the Cheerful Letter Exchange to allow any one to make use of its magazine by addressing letters asking for money, clothing, or other articles, to those whose names are printed in the paper. This prohibition includes requests to borrow money and the offering of articles for sale. The name of any person who disobeys this rule will be dropped from the list, and any one who receives a request of this description is desired by the Central Committee to return no answer, but to enclose the letter at once to the Chairman of this Department.

Many people do care for just the kind of friendly service for which we are organized. We limit our efforts to them and their wishes.

CHEERFUL LETTER WORKERS

There is a tendency among our workers during the holiday season, or on a special anniversary, to call their *regular correspondents* "personal friends" in order to send coats, dresses, hats, shoes (old and new) and money. We remind the workers that this does not comply with the rules established by the Cheerful Letter Exchange many years ago, and which are still existent. Any *regular correspondent* obtained from the Exchange is a member of the Exchange and not a "personal friend." The list of gifts issued by the Exchange, which may be had for the writing, includes many articles that are in keeping with the rules. Will you help us to carry on our good work in the spirit in which it was organized?

The Department again calls to your attention that there are many shut-ins dependent upon the Exchange for their only Christmas cheer. If your local committee can send an extra package or two, will you please write at once.

CORRESPONDENTS

These *regular correspondents* may be adopted after postcard consultation with Mrs. Laura M. Hurst, 78 Penfield Street, Roslindale, Mass. This should be done in order to avoid duplication in arranging for *regular correspondents* and it might be well to make a second choice.

1. Mrs. Charlie Boggan, B. 33, Southern Pines, N. C., is 65 years old. She and her husband are alone and wish to be cheered along a bit from our Society. She is a good church member and leads an upright life and will be delighted if one of our workers will choose her as a regular correspondent.

2. Mrs. Archie Brown, Green Lee, Va., writes that she prefers a regular correspondent. She is 28 years old and has four children, one boy, age 9, and three girls, ages 1½, 4 and 7. This family is a long way from school and church and a friendly correspondence would help to relieve a lonesomeness. Mrs. Brown likes to crochet and embroider.

3. I love to write and I would be so happy to have a regular correspondent. I don't go anywhere because I have had tuberculosis for the last two years. The days are so dark and lonesome and my future does not seem very bright. I have

five children, four boys, ages 7-17 and one girl, age 4. Being a member of the Cheerful Letter Exchange will, I hope, bring a little sunshine into my life. Mrs. Viola Turlington, R. 1, Kerens, Tex.

4. Just my husband and I keep house twenty miles from town in a very isolated place. I cannot do much work owing to a very bad stomach so would appreciate a steady correspondence with some good lady. I am 27 years old. Mrs. Della Shelton, R. 2, Ten Mile, Tenn.

5. Lillian Joyce, Preston, Va., is just 16 years old and longs for a correspondence with some young girl. She has four brothers and two sisters but no near neighbors. Here is an opportunity for one of our younger members to help an older sister with a regular correspondence.

6. Mrs. Nora Franks, General Delivery, Chillicothe, Tex., lives in a cotton country and doesn't get to go very much. She is 36 years old and has seven children, ages 1 to 16. A friendly letter would make her path a little easier and lessen her cares.

7. I am looking forward to a correspondence with one of your workers. I am 41 years old, with four grown children. We live in a good Christian community and attend Church once a month. Regardless of a very busy life a cheerful letter now and then would certainly add a few pleasures after a hard day's work. Mrs. Nora Stone, Ridgeway, Va.

8. Mrs. Pearl Sexton, Edison, N. C., is only 25 years old with three small children. She is a regular church attendant and asks admission to our Exchange. An interesting correspondence would prove very satisfactory.

9. I have filled out the Enrollment Blank the best I know how and I hope it will receive your kind consideration. I am 70 years old and live with my son Felix. My husband and I attend church occasionally but we cannot do much work. Lovey, may the good Lord bless your work and please send me a regular correspondent. Mrs. Creighton Stockton, Young Harris, Ga.

10. Mrs. W. H. Rogers, Richfield, N. C., writes a lovely letter although it contains much sadness—so here is a chance for one of our workers to see that a little sunshine goes to this woman. Mrs. Rogers suffers from high blood pressure and is recovering from broken blood vessels. Her husband has a hernia operation ahead of him. They and their two children live on a little farm and find it hard to make ends meet. Good reading will be most acceptable and the exchange of letters, provided a stamp is enclosed, would surely gladden her heart. She is 55 years old.

APPEALS

These appeals are not to be taken as *regular correspondents* and need not be answered a second time. As the holiday season approaches, please see that toys, games, and candy are included in each package where there are children in the family.

1. Mrs. Walter Black, Warrensville, N. C., has been quite ill for the past eight weeks and longs to be remembered during these dark hours. An assortment of pictures or any good book would help to pass away the many dreary hours.

2. I live with my only brother and attend church regularly. Having been in the hospital twice just recently I am not able to do a great deal of hard work. Do you suppose some good member would send me some quilt scraps and needles and thread? This little attention would make the Cheerful Letter Exchange seem very real. Miss Laura Proffitt, Cobham, Va.

3. Mrs. Angie Silver, R. 1, Lookout Rd., Asheville, N. C., says she wishes an "Appeal," and we are glad to publish her request which may include reading of any kind together with sewing materials. She is 24 years old and the mother of a boy, age 2, and a girl, age 5. The children are particularly interested in Santa Claus.

4. Mrs. Oscar D. Williams, R.F.D. 1, B. 81, Atkins, Va., writes to tell us of a long sickness she has had and so is unable to take care of her home. She is 49 years old, has six children, ages 7 to 17, girls and boys. Their home is in a mountain country and the children travel three miles to school. She is able to do needle

work or piece quilts and looks forward to a little cheer in this fashion.

5. I have been a widow for 10 years and a little cheer would seem awfully good. I have eight grown children, ages 18 to 32, and it would be nice to see our request printed in the magazine. I never have an extra penny for things I would like and wonder if some of the *Cheerful Letter* friends would send embroidery articles with the necessary thread and needles. Also our family enjoys good reading. Mrs. Cora Loyd, Campbell, Va.

6. Mrs. Truman McNiel lives in a Mexican neighborhood way out in Blanca, Colo., and if some of our workers in the Pacific Coast region would send her some reading material it certainly would be appreciated. She is 31 and her girl is 8.

7. I hope you will be kind enough to honor my appeal as I live in a very lonesome but civil place. I am 23 years old with a boy 1, and a girl 3; my sister also lives with us. I hardly ever leave home like other people and I would be so thankful if some person connected with your Society would remember me with a few sewing materials. And it would be fine, too, if the children might have a few toys for their Christmas stockings. Mrs. Pearl Greer, Clifton, N. C.

8. Mrs. Mary Baldwin, R.F.D. 1, Whitetop, Va., wrote in a great haste to become a member of the Exchange. Because there is a waiting list her turn did not come until this issue. She is 39 years old and has five children, ages 1 to 19. Christmas cheer will be most welcome.

9. I am 74 years old and appeal to you for membership in the Exchange. I hope someone will remember me at Christmas time. Mrs. Mary E. Shelton, Lawsonville, N. C.

10. I am such a poor writer that I guess it would be better that I had an appeal published. We live in a farm back off the road with no passing and where neighbors are very careless about visiting. Because I am afflicted with rheumatism I am not able to walk to church so must depend on reading matter from the outside. My 13-year-old girl attends school and any Bible stories or school materials would please her very much. Our family has had bad luck the last few years and it looks as though we would never get back on our feet again to make ends meet. Any kind of cheer you can send into this sad and stricken home will more than repay you for your effort. Mrs. Scott Hurley, Hector, Ark.

11. Mrs. Wyatt Eldreth, Lansing, N. C., is 34 years old with an 8-year-old boy. Her husband is a minister and they both enjoy the *Cheerful Letter Magazine* ever so much. Packages of Christmas cards, etc., may be sent them for further distribution, or anything that would brighten a few hearts on Christmas morning.

12. I am 42 years old with four children—boys' ages, 3, 7 and 10, and a girl, age 1½. We are just renters and barely have enough money to exist. We have no family or friends near us and we are pretty lonely. If someone would like to make a family very happy on Christmas they would not be making a mistake to remember us. What it would mean to me to have my children have a little toy or game, and some reading! Mrs. Ora Davis, Crabtree, Ark.

13. Miss Mary S. Ledbetter, R. 1, B. 43, Mayoden, N. C., is 12 years old and has one brother, age 9, and 3 sisters, ages 7, 5 and 2. She hasn't walked for 11 months so has missed going to school and finds it very lonely at home. She asks for some embroidery designs and floss. A Christmas package would turn a lonely household into one of gladness. Please don't forget us.

14. As I am getting old (65) and lonely I would like to have my plea in the *Cheerful Letter Magazine*. I would enjoy some writing paper, embroidery thread, or just anything to cheer me in my lonely hours. I hope the package arrives in time for Christmas. Mrs. Arthur Jones, R.F.D. 3, Lenoir, N. C.

15. In my school work I am often asked for copies of "Daddy Long Legs," "Tom Sawyer" and "Huckleberry Finn." If someone has duplicate copies on her bookshelves, will she please remember my little school, together with any pictures or booklets. Mrs. Gale Simms, Endicott, Va.

OMENS

Marjorie Dillon

When out of doors is cold and gray
And snow is drifted deep,
And all the trees are stripped and bare,
And streams are sound asleep;
When rosy children skim the ice,
And shout that winter's prime,
And snowmen stout defy the sun—
It's nearing Christmas time.
When secrets tingle in the air,
And holly wreaths appear;
When forests yield their spruce and fir
To add their tang and cheer;
When carols of the long ago
Blend sweet with sleigh-bells' chime—
By all these tokens, happy hearts
May know it's Christmas time!

—*Christian Register.*

POLICE DOG HIKES 200 MILES IN ARCTIC

Gerta, a pedigreed German police dog, naturally enough, prefers the comforts of civilization to the hardships of the frozen north. The conclusion is obvious, for Gerta has just returned to her former home in Prince Albert, Sask., after a 200-mile hike through forests, across frozen muskeg, ice-ribbed rivers and lakes. Only her natural dog-instinct for direction guided her safely back home on her lone trek through the ice-bound wilderness.

Gerta had been given away by her master to a trapper last fall, and he took her with him to the Smooth Stone Lake area, 100 miles north of Big River. She apparently was content in her new surroundings for several months. Recently, however, she disappeared, but two weeks later woke her original owner in Prince Albert one morning with her scratching and whining at the door. —*Selected.*

HELPFUL ADVICE ON BEGONIAS

By Mary F. Colburn

Most begonias require to be kept rather on the dry side and especially must the drainage in the flower pot be good.

Begonias should not stand in containers which keep out a circulation of air around the flower pot.

Why all the fuss over the appearance of a clay flower pot? What is so objectionable in this red or yellow clay pot? If you realized that your plant was more happy and healthy in the old fashioned container, would you bother to buy something that was going to shut the air away from your plants and make them sick through lack of proper drainage? That is what happens in most cases. The plants are sick from an over supply of water or from stagnant water at the roots, or from soil that has been kept too wet. Perhaps watering your begonias only every other day might be better than doing it every day. Try that remedy for a while and see how they get along. If the house is very warm and the soil very dry so the pot gives off a sound when thumped to indicate the roots are dry, give water oftener, but watch the plant. —*Boston Globe.*

CHRISTMAS GIFTS

Edgar Daniel Kramer

The gifts I give are simple things,
That I have made with eager hands,
When, done with tasks that bring me bread.
Lo, I have found the bench that stands
Beneath the attic's sloping eaves,
Where I have worked with yielding wood
That took the shape of my desire,
The while I found its fragrance good.
A little chest for lavender,
A rack for ties, a serving-tray,
Two book-ends weighted down with brass,
A gong the vagrant breezes sway,
A set of tiny furniture,
A doll's house where strange shadows start,
Are simple gifts which I bestow
Upon my loved ones with my heart.

Character is—what a man is in the dark. —*D. L. Moody.*

The real tragedy of life is not in being limited to one talent, but in the failure to *use* the one talent.

—*Edgar W. Work.*

READS SKULLS TO BARE SECRETS OF PAST

If prehistoric peoples had left their interesting skulls around where they would be easier to find, this would be a pleasanter world for Dr. Ales Hrdlicka, anthropologist. If modern women would stay home and out of the professions it would be a pleasanter world, he believes, not only for himself, but for everybody.

About these two things the stocky little Bohemian is firm and immovable.

Doctor Hrdlicka is one of the world's leading figures in the field of anthropology, the science of physical facts about man and his development.

This restless scientist with an unquenchable curiosity about ancient human beings roves up and down the continents, summer after summer. His equipment is a zestful mind, calipers, gages, and a diffident way of explaining that his name is pronounced *Alesh Hertlitshka.*

He digs, rummages, pokes, and scrapes at old burial-mounds. He forages enthusiastically at almost obliterated scenes of time-forgotten massacres and plagues. Wherever ancient human bones lie, there he is, thumping at skulls. His calipers measure the spans of old brows, his gages the depths of long empty eye-sockets. Thigh-bones tell him much about tribal diets. Brain-capacities fascinate him.

Now he is back in Washington, in the dingy little room which for thirty-three years has been his office at the National Museum. That many years ago he went there to establish the now world-famous Division of Physical Anthropology of the Smithsonian Institution.

He has discovered punctured skulls showing that Americans, 2,000 years ago, practiced brain surgery. The technique of the primitive surgeons was so good that they lost few patients.

Now he will study the accumulations of the summer and write papers on cephalic indexes, race deterioration, and evolution, with foot-notes pointing to the future of man. The work is not new to him, or the little grimy room. The walls there are lined with filing cabinets, shelves, and books. The papers he collected; the books he wrote. He is proud of them and of the room.

"This little room," he says almost shyly, "is part of me."

It must be. Everything in it is his, wrought into ink and print from a pen never winter-bound. In 1929 the magazine *Anthropologie,* published in Prague, printed an anniversary volume of his works. In it, twelve pages were devoted to listing his scientific books and articles. There were, then, 251 of them. Since then he has added fifty-three more.

When he gets up and moves out of that room it is to go into a room containing more than 16,000 skulls and skeletons assembled by himself through the years. He regards them almost with reverence, he speaks of them with vast pride. It lies in his voice as he says that this, too, is "part" of him. It is his carefully built-up "library" of the human race. Science will have recourse to it centuries hence.

His brushed, crisp, white mustache lies cool and austere on his upper lip as he speaks. His white, bushy hair, spanked and brushed to lie straight back, moves as he talks, in an accent still colored by Bohemia.

Doctor Hrdlicka was born there, in Humpolec, sixty-seven years ago. In 1882, aflame with ambition, he came to the United States. The story goes that he had a few copper coins, this boy of thirteen, when his ship plowed past the Statue of Liberty. Suddenly, impulsively, he walked to the rail, fished them out of his pocket and threw them into the Bay. He stepped on American soil literally without a cent.

Three years more than half a century haven't changed him, much. Many of his habits and ideas still are Continental, with guiding overtones of science.

In the evening, he reads. His favorite book or story will deal with pioneer days in the West. Fiction or truth, the book must be short, with plenty of action. He will not read modern novels. They are too long, much too wordy. Kipling and Stevenson charm him. A modern trilogy appalls him.

He is contemptuous of modern people who want their thinking done for them by writers. All they want is stimuli. Men and women alike.

About women *The New Outlook* already has quoted him:

"Hrdlicka has been twice married, the second time in 1920. It is his firm belief that woman's place is in the home; women are the chief pivots of human relationships, he says, and their first duty is to their homes and families. He hints that past civilizations have fallen out of joint when their women obtained too many privileges."

He won't deny that that is his conviction. The natural confines of women, he explains patiently, are home-making and the having and rearing of babies. When a woman steps beyond that, no money in existence can compensate for the sacrifice of natural happiness—or shouldn't, at any rate, he holds.

He believes women must work, of course, but if it must be work outside the home, let it be jobs to which they are adapted, that involve sentiment, beauty, or art—and definitely not art in the creative sense. Feminists will not like his belief that few women have been great sculptors, painters, writers, or scientists.

All that he has discovered about the human being, all that he feels about contemporary and future humans, can not erase one small regret.

He always wanted a large plot of ground on which he could cultivate every tree and plant the soil and climate would support. He has, instead, a tiny piece of ground in Rock Creek Park in Washington. It's all right, though, he tells you. He wouldn't have time to work on a larger place, anyway.

—*From The Literary Digest.*

Jesus, teach me how to pray,
Suffer not my thought to stray,
Send distractions far away,
Sweet Holy Child.
Let me not be rude or wild,
Make me meek and mild,
As the angels undefiled,
Sweet Holy Child.

FEEDING THE BIRDS

A score of years or so ago the feeding of birds in winter time was a diversion of the children—beamed upon by older and presumably wiser folk who thought it merely a pretty and innocent practice. Crumbs occasionally were scattered on window ledges and front porches, that juvenile noses might be flattened thrillingly against glass. But nobody who was wiser and older really believed that these impromptu banquets for birds were necessary. It was an amusement comparable to blowing soap bubbles on a stormy day.

Times change. Everybody, in a manner of speaking, feeds birds now, and everybody is quite grave about the humanitarian necessity of it at certain seasons. The Audubon Society recommends and supervises the practice. City councils are not too august to refrain from indicating the necessity. Citizens of credit and renown, as famous as any John Gilpin, will estimate for you—and quite liberally—the number of birds they have for pensioners when their suburbs are shrouded in snow. And here is a secret—their respective and respectable noses all are snubbed against windowpanes, as though they were children again.

It is a hopeful augury. Individuals and nations may become too severe and selfish for any practical purpose, happiness considered. But neither nations nor individuals may become too tolerant and gentle—or at least there seems no immediate peril of it. And any people that takes thought of the plight of juncos and such, when the weed-stalks are hidden by winter and the larder of the countryside is locked against the birds, is a better and a wiser people because of this concern. Human destiny is more fortunate when in the keeping of men and women who find pity for a chilly, small bird in the frosted wistaria vine.

—*Christian Science Monitor.*

My soul is too glad and too great to be at heart the enemy of any man.

—*Martin Luther.*

WITH OUR BOYS AND GIRLS

A CHRISTMAS APARTMENT PARTY

Daisy D. Stephenson

Betty Ann Blythe took the family moving as a lark, a new adventure, until she woke up and found herself living in an apartment house in a strange city.

Betty Ann was nine, and so sunny and lovable that she usually sparkled. Yet this week before Christmas she sat huddled in the window seat, blinking very fast for two reasons: first, father had just telephoned that he must go back to Chicago at once, and he couldn't tell when he would return; second, Betty Ann's big brother, Dick, wrote that as to holiday plans he was very much up in the air.

This was, of course, a joke, as Dick was an air-mail pilot in the Southwest. He was about to get a better job, he said, piloting a passenger plane. So he expected to spend Christmas "on the wing." "Tell Grandma she won't need to make my favorite mince pie and those Christmas cookies with pictures on them. And tell B. A. not to let living in an apartment cramp her style. If I meet Santa Claus in the air, I'll give him your new address, just to avoid any mistakes."

Mother had been very quiet after reading Dick's letter. And Grandma had fumbled in her apron pocket and polished her glasses. As for Betty Ann, she took to the window seat to think. Then all at once she dimpled, began to hum a carol, and went skipping down the hall, her eyes bright as Christmas stars.

"Grandpa Castle and Miss Nancy have lived here two years," she remembered. "I'll ask Grandpa what people do in apartments."

After a satisfactory chat with the old soldier, Betty Ann twinkled back for a conference with Grandma and Mother.

"But there are six apartments," exclaimed Mother doubtfully. "We haven't even met the people—"

"That south apartment on the first floor is closed," Grandma put in. "The tenants are in California. And the one back of us is empty."

"I do hope someone nice moves in," said Betty Ann. "For there's only the Castles, and that sweet Mrs. Foster next to them. And what do you think? A man lives all by himself in that big apartment downstairs. He writes stories, the janitor told me. And I'm going to invite him to our Christmas party."

Miss Nancy was young and pretty and she taught in a girls' school. When Betty mentioned Christmas, Miss Nancy glowed like a little girl herself.

"Oh, Betty Ann," she lilted. "I've been thinking about Christmas ever since Hallowe'en! I adore everything about Christmas." She caught Betty Ann's hands and they spun around in joyous merry-go-round fashion, just as the postman came from one direction and a smart car drew up at the curb from another.

"Like Christmas?" The postman echoed their query with a chuckle. "Sure, I have to—with two youngsters talking themselves hoarse about Santa Claus, and even the baby looking wise! My uncle sends our tree from the mountains. He's a ranger."

Betty Ann gave an excited little gasp. "I'm going to have a tree and invite everybody in the apartment," she confided. "You're awfully lucky to have a baby. I do think a baby would make Christmas perfectly perfect."

"Say, I'll get your tree for you," promised the beaming postman. "Just you count on me for a dandy!"

It was then the tall, rather haughty-looking gentleman came up from the car. The post man spoke to him with deference. "Registered package for you, Mr. Wynne." Betty Ann raised wide brown eyes to Miss Nancy's dancing blue ones.

"Oh, he's the writer man that has the lovely big apartment! He doesn't look very happy, does he? Do you suppose he'd come to our Christmas party?"

"No harm in asking him, my dear. I sometimes think Mr. Robert Wynne doesn't know the meaning of Christmas spirit, clever though he is. He lives alone and he never has a wreath in his

windows. He told Grandpa they interfered with the light."

The writer man sat by a cheery wood fire after supper, scowling over a list. It was headed "Christmas Gifts," and under that were names of relatives and friends who would not have felt flattered had they heard Robert Wynne's monologue.

Tap-tap at the door. "Now, who's that?"

He stood scowling down at the little dark-eyed girl he had noticed before. He relaxed, almost smiled, as she told him breathlessly about her plans. An apartment Christmas party! Everybody was coming. They were to have a tree, and Grandma would make old-fashioned cookies with castles and birds and things raised in dough. And they would sing carols around Mother at the piano.

Anise cakes! Carols! Around Mother —Suddenly time fell away and the crust of lonely years broke through. Robert Wynne was a boy with a boy's excitement over Christmas. Christmas Eve with its candle in the window! "O Little Town of Bethlehem"—and Mother at the organ.

"Suppose you come in and tell me all about it," he said gently to Betty Ann. Before that witch of a Betty Ann skipped to bed she had not only advised Mr. Wynne what to buy for his little relatives —she had promised to help select the gifts. Also she had flourished her petition before him.

"We've got to let this new couple move in," she explained eagerly, "because they're so nice and young, and besides, a baby is exactly what we need most. The owner never has allowed babies in the house, but this baby is awfully good, his mother says, and practic'lly never cries. We live next, you know, and nobody would ever hear but us if he did cry a weenty bit. But he won't," Betty Ann clinched it all triumphantly, "because I mean to take care of him a lot myself."

"Of course, that puts the matter in an entirely different light." Mr. Wynne coughed. There was a queer glint in his gray eyes as he scrawled his signature to Betty Ann's petition. He wondered what Miss Nancy Castle and the rest would do if they knew he himself was the owner of the apartment house.

The day before Christmas it snowed enough even to satisfy Betty Ann, and she and Mr. Wynne fairly blew home from shopping in a swirl of white. The tree had arrived and Miss Nancy met them, prettier than ever in her excitement. And after supper, in Betty Ann's apartment, all three shared the fun of tree-trimming. The pungent fragrance of the fir seemed to work magic on them all. And by bedtime it was a tree right out of fairyland—a shimmering, glittering, sparkling vision that simply took one's breath.

"Oh, I do believe it's going to be a sparkly Christmas!" yawned Betty Ann, peeking from her window to spy a star, after the solemn ceremony of hanging her stocking. And it was a bright, beautiful, sun-on-snow morning she looked out on. She was struggling dutifully to finish her oatmeal when their biggest Christmas surprise arrived.

"Daddy!" shrieked Betty Ann, beside herself with delight. And just before time for the guests and the presents and the tree, there was another ring at the bell.

"A telegram from Dick," guessed Mother.

An instant later she was being hugged by Dick in person—Dick, brown and jolly and handsome in his pilot's uniform.

"The new boss told me to clear out and give the family a treat. And did I fly? I simply punched holes in the sky!" Here he tossed Betty Ann to his shoulder. "And I'm hollow to my toes. Say, Grandma—"

"I couldn't help hoping." Grandma gave him a little push toward the pantry. "So there's mince pie and lots of Christmas cookies, dear."

The company arrived all at once! Grandpa Castle, that fine old soldier; Miss Nancy, lovely as a princess in blue velvet, a sprig of holly in her bonny brown hair. There was Mrs. Foster, looking like a wren in trim brown. The

young Browns looked very proud and happy as, indeed, they had a perfect right to; for did they not provide the guest of honor, His Royal Highness, the Baby?

From the way that nine-months-old baby kicked and crowed and reached out for the pretty things, Betty Ann was sure he was saying, like Grandpa Castle, "The best Christmas of my life!"

"Every Christmas is the best," nodded Grandma with a reminiscent smile. "I remember the time we came to Iowa from Kentucky in a covered wagon, and we spent Christmas in a dug-out; but Mother saw to it that my sister and I each got a corn-husk doll and a calico cat with red whiskers. I still feel a thrill over my picture book—made of brown paper, it was, and full of funny pictures my father drew."

Grandpa Castle chuckled over a hobby-horse his father had made of cotton wood chunks for a long-ago Christmas. "And now," he ended with a twinkle at Dick, "boys don't want hobby horses, or even live ones. They want planes instead."

After the presents, Mother went to the piano, and everybody sang. At the sound of Miss Nancy's sweet, fresh voice, leading the carols, Mr. Wynne looked as if he had been mistaken about the world never hearing the angels' song.

"Bless the child!" He looked long at Betty Ann, singing like a bird, her round face pink with happiness. "She has worked a miracle. Whoever heard of an apartment party on Christmas?" Then he, too, joined in, as he heard the dear, familiar strains of "O Little Town of Bethlehem!"

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THE CHEERFUL LETTER EXCHANGE

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